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[] NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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April 17, 1968MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Nitze
Mr. Helms
Dr. HornigSUBJECT: Considerations Affecting
OX CART Program Phaseout

Dr. Flax has requested distribution of the attached document as background for the discussion of OXCART at the Executive Session of the ExCom meeting scheduled for April 23, 1968.

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James Q. Reber
Secretary
NRP Executive Committee

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Attachment

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25X1**CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING OXCART PROGRAM PHASEOUT**

The actions initiated by the BoB/DoD/CIA Study of November 1966 which resulted in the President's decision to phase out the OXCART Program in FY-1968, were based on a number of premises as to the operational, technical, political, and cost factors which affected the value of continuing this program even after a substantial military reconnaissance capability with similar vehicles (SR-71's) became available. Although, in accordance with the original decision the removal of the OXCART aircraft from flight status was to have been completed by December 1967, and phaseout was to have been completed by the end of FY-1968, several circumstances, including deployment of the aircraft to Southeast Asia, resulted in slipping the original plan. Some of the basic premises on which the phaseout decision was made have recently been questioned, and, since a considerable period of time has elapsed since earlier consideration of the issues involved, it is appropriate to review them once more. In any event, the OXCART Program is now at a critical point with respect to retaining all or some of the aircraft in operational status beyond June 30, 1968, or finalizing the decision to cease flight operations with the remaining OXCART aircraft by June 30, 1968 and to place the aircraft in storage thereafter.

In what follows, the various factors and issues affecting the OXCART phaseout decision are briefly outlined. The technical and operational implications of the differences in the OXCART and SR-71 air vehicles and sensor systems are omitted since these have been extensively treated in earlier NRO documents.

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THE REQUIREMENT FOR VARIOUS TYPES
OF COVERT OVERFLIGHT CAPABILITY

The factors which should be considered include:

(1) Probability of requirement for high-performance covert overflight of highly defended areas (i.e., where U-2R or drone overflight is not practical) is the expected frequency of use of the capability and its value in relation to the cost of maintaining it, sufficient to justify the cost of maintaining it?

(2) Probability that civilian overflight will be the only covert overflight authorized.

(3) Possibility of providing covert civilian overflight capability as an adjunct of SAC operation (of either SR-71's or OXCART aircraft) under DoD management. Would this be equally acceptable from a political viewpoint?

(4) Overseas basing. Are there foreign areas where CIA operations with the OXCART aircraft would be acceptable but military covert operations would not be? Is the converse true in some areas? Is the relative acceptability of CIA vs. military operations dependent on whether there is already an overt U.S. military aircraft operation at the base used or in the same country?

RESPONSIVENESS

Would the continued OXCART operation under CIA management be more responsive to National intelligence requirements than SAC reconnaissance operations using SR-71's or the OXCART aircraft?

Conversely, is the OXCART operation less responsive to the needs of the Department of Defense, particularly where overflight coincides with or precedes military operations?

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Further, in uses such as North Vietnam where covert operation is not a consideration, is the necessity to apply covert security measures to an operation which would otherwise be non-covert, a handicap to effective military utilization of the capability and reconnaissance products?

COMMAND AND CONTROL

Does the CIA channel for command and control of covert overflight operations provide to National authorities greater and more direct control of operations in sensitive situations which may require sudden and unexpected changes in plans? Also, is the CIA reporting of operational incidents and unanticipated situations which may be of concern to National authorities more direct and timely than DoD's or, is DoD command and control to be preferred since it would provide for better integration with other DoD operated sensitive reconnaissance activities in the same areas and might lead to better overall assessments of local situations in light of all related activities?

INTEGRATION OF TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

A useful covert overflight capability depends in large measure upon constantly developing and adapting equipment, tactics and operational procedures to insure an acceptably low level of vulnerability for the overflight aircraft. In the CIA all of the organizational elements required for analysis and reaction to new threat situations are essentially co-located and under the direct control of relatively few senior people without numerous intermediate levels of management and command. However, in many operational areas such as tanker support, logistics and airlift, overseas base operation and personnel, the OXCART program is dependent on DoD support.

In the DoD, while SAC as an operator of the reconnaissance activities is under direct control of the JCS, and SAC has within it certain organic technical and operational support capability, other supporting elements such as DIA, NSA, Air Force Security Service, Air Force Systems Command (the System Program Office and the Foreign Technology Division) are coupled to the operation by various direct and indirect ties,

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some of them involving several intermediate layers of command and management. In this respect, the support of SAC strategic reconnaissance activities is not greatly different than the support of other military operational activities. On the other hand, there is within the DoD a much broader base for support than in the CIA. Thus, for example, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] may be drawn from other DoD programs and, without the restraint of covert security, in-theatre support for the SAC in such areas as communications, command and control and base operations, can be more economical and efficient. The question is whether currently provided support is adequate for maintaining a highly invulnerable reconnaissance capability in the face of changing threat environments. If necessary, it would be possible to simplify and make more direct the channels for technical and operational support of SAC reconnaissance by other DoD elements. However, SAC has not expressed either the need or desire for modifying present arrangements.

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[] NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 7, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Study of Options for Continuing Operation
of the OXCART Aircraft in Fiscal Year 1969

In accordance with your request, a study of the feasibility and cost of continuing operation of the OXCART aircraft beyond the currently programmed phaseout date of June 30, 1968 has been completed. Although a number of alternatives have been studied, I believe the following options are significant for your consideration:

Option 1. The OXCART aircraft would be transferred to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) by October 31, 1968. SAC operation of seven of these aircraft (six operationally configured plus one trainer) at current rates would begin by about January 1, 1969, with substitution of Air Force for contractor support wherever possible. The eighth (test) aircraft would be sent to Palmdale for continuing contractor test operation.

Option 2. The OXCART aircraft would be transferred to SAC as in Option 1 and the SAC SR-71 inventory would be reduced by eight SR-71's to be stored at Palmdale, starting September 1, 1968. Flying at current OXCART rates would begin by November 1, 1968.

Option 3. The OXCART aircraft would be retained under CIA operational control and management. [] would be closed and aircraft and other program assets would be transferred [] to Beale Air Force Base by October 31, 1968. Substitution of some Air Force maintenance and other support for contractor support is assumed. Present OXCART flying rates would be resumed by January 1, 1969.

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Option 4. Current OXCART operations would be continued [redacted] This is a base line option against which the costs of other options may be measured.

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The costs of the options studied were derived for FY 1968 and 1969 on the basis of the best currently available data. These costs were necessarily estimates, since details of operating arrangements and contractor support would need to be worked out on the basis of more complete planning for implementation of any of these options. One factor affecting costs of options other than Option 4 (continuing CIA operation [redacted] was the need for additional facilities at Beale Air Force Base, including aircraft shelters, hangars, trailers and headquarters building. For purposes of cost estimation, it was assumed that the demountable units at [redacted] could be moved to Beale Air Force Base and costs were included for site preparation, foundations and utilities required to accommodate these buildings. On-base housing for additional military personnel at Beale would also pose a problem in the long run, but this could not be resolved initially in any event on the schedules proposed for the phaseover options. Housing trailers [redacted] could help to alleviate this situation for either military or contractor personnel, and it was assumed these trailers would be made available.

The costs of the options are as follows:

	Additional FY 1968	Total FY 1969
Option 1	[redacted]	
Option 2		
Option 3		
Option 4		

These costs include consideration of NRP costs for operation of the OXCART by the CIA, Air Force costs for operation of the OXCART (as appropriate in each option), CIA and Air Force direct support costs for each option, costs of closeout of [redacted] for Options 1, 2 and 3 and costs of construction

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In order to provide comparative costs for these options corresponding to a full year of operation without one-time costs included, an estimate for FY 1970 costs is included in the attached Table II. In summary, the FY 1970 costs are estimated to be as follows:

Option 1
Option 2
Option 3
Option 4

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The Air Force has reviewed the feasibility of options calling for operation of the OXCART aircraft by SAC, from the standpoint of training, maintenance, facilities at Beale Air Force Base, and contractor support and has concluded that the options and schedules described above are feasible. However, there are substantial differences in the configurations of the OXCART and SR-71 aircraft in the areas of cockpit, instruments, sensors, engines and airframe. If commonality in subsystems were to be sought between the two aircraft, considerable expenditure of time and money would be required for modification. Therefore, the options considered contemplate only the operation of the OXCART aircraft in their present configurations. This would require formation of specialized units within SAC capable of maintaining and operating the OXCART aircraft

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as is. Conversion of as much of the maintenance from contractor to military personnel will require substantial improvements in the technical data available for the OXCART aircraft; continuation of essentially the current level of contractor maintenance and overhaul services would be required until the SAC unit were manned and trained. However, because of the small number of OXCART aircraft and their special subsystems, the continuing level of contractor support would continue to be greater than that utilized for the SR-71. These factors were taken into account in estimating option costs.

Continuation of the OXCART program into FY 1969 under any of the options discussed herein will not only require additional procurement of spares, AGE and other equipment in the OXCART program, but will impact the SR-71 program, since [redacted] of such items common to the SR-71 and OXCART programs have not been procured for the SR-71 in FY 1968, on the assumption that OXCART assets would become available in FY 1969.

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Security would require special attention under all of the options calling for transfer of the OXCART aircraft to Beale Air Force Base. The most difficult problems would arise in connection with Option 3, in which the CIA would continue to operate the aircraft at Beale Air Force Base. This option has not been reviewed with the CIA, and if implemented, might require additional buildings and other facilities at Beale Air Force Base, not included in the present cost estimates, in the interest of maintaining security separation between the OXCART and the SR-71 programs at Beale Air Force Base. Options 1 to 3, however, all call for development of a plausible explanation for the surfacing of these additional aircraft, differing in configuration

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from either the YF-12A or the SR-71. These security problems have not been addressed in the current study but would require detailed attention if implementation of any of Options 1 through 3 were contemplated.

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Alexander H. Flax
Director


- 2 Attachments
 - Table I FY 68 and FY 69
Program Costs
 - Table II FY 70 Program
Costs

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